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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBAI 006940

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TAGS: [ECIN](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KDEM](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: RAS AL KHAIMAH SHEIKH DISCUSSES ELECTIONS, FREE TRADE
AGREEMENT AND IRAN/IRAQ

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CLASSIFIED BY: Paul R Sutphin, Consul General, Dubai, UAE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1.(C) SUMMARY. On December 4, Ras al-Khaimah (RAK) economic department director Sheikh Mohamad bin Qayid al-Qasimi told poleconoff that he saw no value in the upcoming Federal National Council (FNC) election, as none of the candidates have the experience needed to govern. He stated that he opposes a U.S.-UAE FTA agreement because he believes UAE businesses would not be competitive without protection. Al-Qasimi also expressed his concern over the threat Iran poses to Iraq, and the need for continued US efforts to stabilize Iraq. End summary.

2.(C) Sheikh Mohamad bin Qiyad al-Qasimi discussed a number of topics with poleconoff on December 4. He is the well-connected first cousin of Sheikh Saud bin Saqr al-Qasimi, the Crown Prince and de facto ruler of RAK. (Note: Sheikh Saud's father, Sheikh Saqr, remains RAK's official ruler but is very old and incapacitated.)

Federal National Council Elections

3.(C) Al-Qasimi sees no value in the FNC election in RAK (FNC voting is staggered among the seven Emirates over three polling days, with Dubai and RAK voting on December 18). He believes that none of the candidates understand politics or have the necessary experience to govern effectively. He opined that it would take 20 to 30 years before the FNC would be capable of exercising power. (Note: as constituted, the 40-member FNC is an advisory body only.)

4.(C) No members of the al-Qasimi, the ruling family of RAK, are running in FNC election. Sheikh Mohamad said that since half of the FNC members from RAK are appointed by the ruler, there is no need for any al-Qasimi to run.

5.(C) The main streets of RAK were festooned with campaign banners for a number of candidates for the FNC. Poleconoff has not observed similar campaigning in any of the other northern Emirates. When asked to comment on the campaign activity, al-Qasimi said that one benefit of the elections is that they make the people "feel good." (Comment: it is clear that the enthusiasm for voting in RAK is genuine, even with an election featuring a limited number of appointed electors voting for a body with no legislative power. But given the public interest generated, at least in RAK, the FNC exercise is a useful one in engaging the public on the path to true representative

government. End Comment.)

US-UAE Free Trade Agreement

6.(C) Al-Qasimi is not in favor of a US-UAE Free Trade Agreement (FTA). He said that if a FTA is signed, the UAE's economic activity would increase, but at the expense of UAE businesses. Al-Qasimi likened the negotiations as a mature adult, the US, coercing a 12 year old, the UAE, to enter into a long-term agreement. Al-Qasimi believes UAE businesses are incapable of competing against US (and other international firms) without protection.

Iraq and U.S. Foreign Policy

7.(C) Al-Qasimi's major concern in Iraq is the threat posed by Iran. He said Iran does not want a stable, unified Iraq and that the US must seal Iraq's border with Iran. He claims that four million Iranians are now living in Iraq, and that they now claim to be Iraqis. In addition, he believes the current Iraqi leadership is acting on Iran's behalf, but he did not elaborate.

8.(C) Al-Qasimi stated that Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia benefit politically and economically from the continuing conflict and are not actively trying to stop the war. He was unable to offer examples of how these states benefit from the conflict. He stated Israel wants the conflict to continue as well, because as long as the media is focused on Iraq, Israel can use its military against the Palestinians without much international scrutiny.

9.(C) Al-Qasimi said that the situation in Iraq and the US's "blind support" for Israel has hurt the image of the US amongst the Arabs, but that a sudden pullout from Iraq would be catastrophic for the region. He emphasized that the US must act in its national interest, i.e. continue its security efforts in

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Iraq, despite the cost in US lives and treasure.
SUTPHIN